Fitnah of labeling others disbelievers

Muhammad Nasir Al-Din Al-Albani

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فتنة التكفير

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Translator introduction

All praise is due to Allah; we praise Him and seek His forgiveness.

We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls and the wickedness of our deeds.

He, whom Allah guides, none can misguide him, and he whom He misguides, none can guide him.

I bear witness there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah, alone, without partner.

His is the dominion and His is the praise.

He gives life and causes death, and He is over all things competent. Now then:

I have translated the book before you, entitled (**Fitnah of labeling others disbelievers**) by (**Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani**) because of the many benefits and advantages it contains for the Muslim.

This translation is my own effort. If I do well, it is from Allah and His guidance to me, and if I make a mistake, it is from myself and from Satan.

I ask Allah to make this work of mine purely for Him and to spread the word of truth throughout the entire earth and to teach Muslims who do not speak Arabic their religion that Allah has chosen for them.

The one in need of his Lord's forgiveness: **Omar bin Ahmed Tohamy**.

The word of Sheikh Al-Albani, may Allah have mercy on him, on the issue of excommunication [labelling someone disbeliever]

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His aid, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our own souls and the wickedness of our deeds. He whom Allah guides, none can misguide, and he whom Allah misguides, none can guide. I bear witness there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah, alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

As for what follows:

The issue of excommunication in general—not just of rulers, but also of those governed—is a great, ancient fitnah adopted by one of the ancient Islamic sects known as the Khawarij.

Unfortunately, some preachers or enthusiasts may stray from the Qur'an and Sunnah, albeit in the name of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The reason for this is due to two things:

One is the shallowness of their knowledge.

The other thing—and it is very important—is that they have not fully grasped the fundamental principles of Islamic law, which are the foundation of the correct Islamic call. Anyone who deviates from this principle is considered one of those deviant sects, separate from the group that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) praised in more than one hadith, and even the one that our Lord, the Almighty, mentioned, and made clear that anyone who deviates from it has opposed Allah and His Messenger, as He, the Almighty, said:

﴿وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا﴾

“And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination.” [An-Nisa: 115]

Indeed, Allah - for a matter that is clear to the people of knowledge - did not limit himself to saying,

﴿وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ ..... نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ﴾

“And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him ……. We will give him what he has taken”

And He added to the opposition to the Messenger the following of a path other than the path of the believers, saying:

﴿وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا﴾

“And follows other than the way of the believers-We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination”

Following the path of the believers or not following their path is a very important matter, both positively and negatively. Whoever follows the path of the believers will be saved before the Lord of the Worlds. Whoever deviates from the path of the believers: Hell is sufficient for him, and evil it is as a destination.

From this, many sects have gone astray - both ancient and modern - because they were not satisfied with merely not adhering to the path of the believers, but rather they used their own minds and followed their whims in interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah. Then, based on that, they built very serious conclusions that deviated from the path of our righteous predecessors, may Allah Almighty be pleased with them all.

This part of the noble verse:

﴿وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

“And follows other than the way of the believers”

Was emphasized by the Prophet, may Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him, in more than one authentic Prophetic hadith.

These hadiths - some of which I will cite - are not unknown to the general Muslim community - let alone its elite - but what is unknown about them is that they indicate the necessity of adhering to The way of believers in understanding the Qur’an and Sunnah, and the necessity and emphasis thereof

This point is overlooked - and its necessity is neglected - by many of the elite, not to mention those known as the "Takfir Group" or some other groups that claim to be jihadists, but are in reality remnants of Takfirism. These people - and those - may be righteous and sincere in their inner selves, but this alone is not sufficient for its adherents to be among the saved and successful in the sight of Allah, the Almighty.

A Muslim must combine two things:

1- Sincerity of intention to Allah, the Almighty.
2- Good adherence to the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) path.

Therefore, it is not sufficient for a Muslim to be sincere and serious in what he is doing in terms of acting in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah and calling to them. Rather, in addition to that, his approach must be sound, correct, and upright. This can only be achieved by following the path of the righteous predecessors of this Ummah, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Among the well-known and authentic hadiths that establish what I mentioned - and I referred to it earlier - is the hadith of the seventy-three sects, which is his statement, peace and blessings be upon him: **"The Jews split into seventy-one sects, and the Christians split into seventy-two sects, and my nation will split into seventy-three sects, all of which will be in Hellfire except one. They said: Who are they, O Messenger of Allah? He said: The majority group."** And in another narration: **"What I and my companions are upon."**

So we find that the Prophet's answer, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, completely coincides with the previous verse:

﴿وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

"And follows other than the way of the believers"

So the first ones included in the generality of the verse are the companions of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

In this hadith, the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) did not simply say, **"What I am upon…"**—although that may be sufficient in reality for a Muslim who truly understands the Qur'an and Sunnah—rather, he (peace and blessings be upon him) applied in practice the words of Allah Almighty regarding him (peace and blessings be upon him),

﴿بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

"to the believers is kind and merciful." [At-Tawbah: 128]

It is part of his complete compassion and mercy for his companions and followers that he (peace and blessings be upon him) explained to them that the sign of the saved sect is that its sons and companions will be upon what the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) was upon and what his companions after him were upon. Therefore, it is not permissible for Muslims in general and preachers in particular, to limit their understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah to the known means of understanding, such as knowledge of the Arabic language,

abrogating verses, and other such matters. Rather, before all of that, one must return to the path followed by the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), because—as is clear from their traces and their conduct—they were more sincere to Allah Almighty in worship and more knowledgeable than us regarding the Qur'an and Sunnah, and so on. The praiseworthy qualities that they possessed and were taught by their etiquette.

This hadith is very similar - in terms of its fruitfulness and benefit - to the hadith of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs narrated in the Sunan from Al-Arbadh ibn Sariyah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) gave us a sermon that made our hearts fearful and our eyes tearful. We said: It is as if this is a farewell sermon, so advise us, O Messenger of Allah. He said: **"I advise you to listen and obey, even if an Ethiopian slave is appointed over you. Whoever among you lives will see much discord. So hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs who will come after me. Adhere to them and hold to it fast..."** He then mentioned the hadith.

The evidence for this hadith is the meaning of his answer to the previous question, as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) urged his nation, particularly his Companions, to adhere to his Sunnah. He then went beyond that, saying: **"and the Sunnah of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs who will come after me."**

In this case, we must always and forever harp on this fundamental principle if we want to understand our faith, our worship, our morals, and our behaviour. There is no alternative but to return to the methodology of our righteous predecessors to understand all these essential issues for a Muslim, so that he can truly be considered a saved sect. Hence, ancient and modern sects have gone astray when they failed to pay attention to the meaning of the preceding verse and the significance of the hadith about the Sunnah of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, as well as the hadith about the division of the Ummah. It was quite natural for them to deviate, just as those who came before them deviated from the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the methodology of the righteous predecessors. Among these deviants are the Khawarij, both ancient and modern. The origin of the turmoil of takfir in this age—indeed, for ages—is a verse they constantly harp on, namely the verse:

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

"And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers." [Al-Maidah: 44]

They take it without deep understanding and cite it without precise knowledge. We know that this noble verse has been repeated and its conclusion comes with three expressions:

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

“And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers.” [Al-Maidah: 44]

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. [Al-Maidah: 45]

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

“And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient.” [Al-Maidah: 47]

Then, the complete ignorance of those who cite this verse based on its first expression: **“Then those are the disbelievers”** is that they have not even considered some of the legal texts – Qur’an or Sunnah – in which the word “kufr” is mentioned. They have taken it – without consideration – to mean abandoning the religion, and that there is no difference between this person who has fallen into disbelief and those polytheists among the Jews, Christians, and followers of other religions who have deviated from the religion of Islam.

While the word “kufr” in the language of the Qur’an and Sunnah does not always mean what they are so often talking about and basing this erroneous and mistaken understanding on.

The matter of the word **“the disbelievers”** – in that it does not indicate a single meaning – is the same as the matter of the other two expressions: **“the wrongdoers”** and **“the defiantly disobedient.”** Just as describing someone as unjust or immoral does not necessarily mean they have abandoned their religion. The same is true for someone described as an disbeliever.

This diversity in the meaning of a single word is indicated by the language and then by the Sharia, which was revealed in the Arabic language—the language of the Holy Qur'an.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon everyone who undertakes to issue rulings on Muslims—whether they are rulers or ruled—to have extensive knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah, in light of the methodology of the righteous predecessors.

The Qur'an and the Sunnah—and all that stems from them—cannot be understood except through a thorough knowledge of the Arabic language and its literature. If a student of knowledge is deficient in his knowledge of the Arabic language, one of the things that will help him remedy that deficiency is to refer to the understanding of the imams and scholars who preceded him, especially the people of the first three centuries, who are known for their goodness. Let us return to the verse:

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

“And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers.” [Al-Maidah: 44]

What is meant by disbelief in this verse? Does it mean abandoning the religion? Or is it something else? I say: We must be precise in understanding this verse, as it may refer to practical disbelief, which is the deviation in actions from some of the rulings of Islam. We are helped in this understanding by the scholar of the Ummah and interpreter of the Qur'an, Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him). All Muslims, except those from those deviant sects, agree that he is a unique leader in interpretation. It is as if he heard at that time exactly what we hear today: that there are people who understand this verse superficially and without detail. He (may Allah be pleased with him) said: **"It is not the disbelief you are suggesting, and it is not disbelief that removes one from the religion. It is disbelief less than disbelief."** Perhaps he meant by this the Khawarij, who rebelled against the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), and as a consequence of that, they shed the blood of believers and did to them what they did not do to the polytheists. He said: **"It is not as they said or as they thought. Rather, it is disbelief less than disbelief."** This concise, clear answer from the interpreter of the Qur'an in interpreting this verse is the ruling that cannot be understood other than it from the texts I mentioned earlier. Moreover, the word "disbelief" is mentioned in many texts. The Qur'an and Hadiths cannot be interpreted - all of them - as equivalent to leaving the fold of Islam. For example, the well-known hadith in the two Sahihs on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said**: "Insulting a Muslim is disobedience, and fighting him is disbelief."** Here, disbelief refers to the sin of disobedience, but the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), who was the most eloquent of people, went to great lengths to warn, saying: **"...and fighting him is disbelief."** On the other hand, can we interpret the first paragraph of this hadith - **"Insulting a Muslim is disobedience"** - to mean the transgression mentioned in the third phrase of the previous verse: **“And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient.”**?

The answer: This may be disobedience synonymous with disbelief, which means leaving the religion. It may also be disobedience synonymous with disbelief, which does not mean leaving the religion, but rather means what the interpreter of the Qur’an said: disbelief less than disbelief. This hadith confirms that disbelief may have this meaning, because Allah Almighty said:

﴿وَإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۖ فَإِن بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ﴾

"And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah." [Al-Hujuraat: 9]

Our Lord, the Almighty, mentioned here the rebellious group that fights the righteous, believing group. However, He did not judge the rebellious group to be a disbeliever, even though the hadith says: **"...and fighting him is disbelief."**

So fighting him is disbelief, not disbelief, as Ibn Abbas said in his interpretation of the previous verse.

So, a Muslim fighting another Muslim is transgression, aggression, immorality, and disbelief. However, this means that disbelief may be practical disbelief or it may be doctrinal disbelief.

Hence, this precise detail was explained and clarified by the Imam - rightly - Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him. After him, his virtuous student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah took on this task, as they both have the merit of warning and praising the division of disbelief into that division whose banner was raised by the interpreter of the Qur'an with that concise, comprehensive statement. Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, and his student and companion Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah constantly emphasize the necessity of distinguishing between doctrinal disbelief and practical disbelief. Otherwise, a Muslim will fall, without realizing it, into the temptation of abandoning the community of Muslims, which the Khawarij of old and some of their followers of the present fell into.

In summary the statement: His saying, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, **"...and fighting him is disbelief"** does not mean - absolutely - leaving the religion. The hadiths on this subject are very numerous, and they - all of them - are a conclusive proof against those who adhere to their limited understanding of the previous verse and adhere to interpreting it as disbelief in belief. This hadith is sufficient for us now, as it is conclusive evidence that a Muslim fighting his Muslim brother is disbelief in the sense of practical disbelief, not disbelief in belief. If we return to the "Takfir Group" - or those who branched off from them - and their attribution of the term "disbelief" and apostasy to rulers - and even more so to those who live under their banner and are organized under their command and employment - then this is based on their corrupt viewpoint, which is based on the fact that these people committed sins and thus became disbelievers.

Among the things that are worth mentioning and recounting is that I met with some of those who were part of the "Takfir group," and then Allah Almighty guided them.

I said to them: "You have declared some rulers to be disbelievers, so why do you declare mosque imams, preachers, muezzins, and mosque servants to be disbelievers? And why do you declare teachers of Islamic law in schools and elsewhere to be disbelievers?"

They said: "Because these people accepted the rule of these rulers who rule by other than what Allah has revealed."

I say: If this acceptance is a heartfelt acceptance of rule by other than what Allah has revealed, then the practical disbelief turns into doctrinal disbelief. Any ruler who rules by other than what Allah has revealed and believing that this is the appropriate rule to adopt in this era, and that it is not appropriate for him to adopt the Shari'a rulings stipulated in the Qur'an and Sunnah, then there is no doubt that this ruler's disbelief is a doctrinal disbelief, not just a practical disbelief. Whoever accepts this and believes in it will be included in it.

Then I said to them: Firstly, you cannot judge every ruler who rules by infidel Western laws—or many of them—if he were asked about ruling by other than what Allah has revealed, he would answer: that ruling by these laws is the truth and appropriate in this era, and that ruling by Islam is impermissible. If they were to say that, they would undoubtedly become disbelievers.

If we move on to the ruled—among whom are scholars, righteous people, and others—how can you judge them as disbelievers simply because they live under a rule that applies to them just as it applies to you? But you declare that these people are infidel apostates, and that ruling by what Allah has revealed is obligatory. Then you say, apologetically, that violating the Sharia ruling simply by doing something does not necessitate ruling that this person has apostatized from his religion. This is exactly what others say, except that you add to them - unjustifiably - the ruling of infidelity and apostasy.

Among the questions that illustrate their error and misguidance is the question: When is a Muslim who testifies that there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah—and who may be praying—judged to have apostatized from his religion?

Is one time sufficient?

Or must he be declared an apostate?

They will not know the answer and will not be guided correctly. We are forced to give them the following example:

A judge rules according to Islamic law. This is his custom and his system, but in one judgment, he slips and rules contrary to Islamic law—that is, he grants the right to the oppressor and

deprives the oppressed. This is definitely a ruling other than what Allah has revealed. Do you say that this is kufr, apostasy?

They will say: No, because this was issued only once.

We then say: If he issues the same ruling a second time, or another ruling that also violates Islamic law, is he considered a disbeliever?

Then we repeat: Three times, four times. When do you say that this is kufr? They will not be able to limit the number of rulings in which he violated Islamic law and not declare him an disbelievers because of them. However, they can do the exact opposite. If it is known that in the first ruling, he approved of rulings other than what Allah revealed—permissible to him—and deemed Islamic rulings unacceptable, then the ruling of apostasy against him would be correct, and the first time. Conversely, if we see dozens of rulings from him in various cases in which he violated Islamic law, and we ask him, "Why did you rule other than what Allah Almighty revealed?" he responds by saying, "I was afraid and feared for myself, or I was bribed," for example, then this is much worse than the first. Nevertheless, we cannot declare him an disbelievers until he expresses what is in his heart that he does not believe in ruling according to what Allah Almighty revealed. Only then can we say that he is a disbelievers who has committed apostasy. In short, it is essential to understand that disbelieve —like disobedience and oppression—is divided into two categories:

Disbelieve, disobedience, and oppression that remove one from the fold of Islam, all of which are based on the heart's desire for it to be permissible, and another that does not remove one from the fold of Islam, which is based on practical belief in what is permissible.

All sins—especially the widespread practice of usury, adultery, drinking alcohol, and other such acts—are considered practical disbelief. It is not permissible to declare disbelievers those who commit sins merely because they commit them and consider them legal, unless it becomes clear to us, with certainty, that they do not consider what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden in their hearts, believing it to be forbidden. If we know that they have committed this contradiction of the heart, then we can rule that they have committed disbelief through apostasy. However, if we do not know this, then we have no way of declaring them disbelievers, because we fear falling under the threat of the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) statement: **"If a man says to his brother, 'O disbeliever,' then one of them will be guilty of it."** There are many hadiths that speak of this, and I will mention one of them with great significance. It tells the story of a companion who fought a polytheist. When the polytheist saw that he was under the blow of the Muslim companion's sword, he said, **"I bear witness there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah"** The companion did not care and killed him. When the news reached the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). He

vehemently denied this, so the Companion apologized, saying that the polytheist had only said it out of fear of being killed. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) replied, **"Why didn't you split open his heart?[1]"** Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim from the hadith of Usamah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him). Therefore, doctrinal disbelief has no fundamental connection to mere actions, but rather its greater connection lies with the heart. We cannot know what is in the heart of the immoral, the wicked, the thief, the adulterer, the usurer, and those similar to them unless they express what is in their hearts with their tongues. As for their actions, they indicate that they have violated the Shari'ah in a practical way. We say, "You have violated, you have committed immorality, and you have committed wickedness." But we do not say, "You have disbelieved and apostatized from your religion," until something is revealed about you that would justify our ruling before Allah Almighty in declaring him an apostate. Then, the well-known ruling in Islam applies to him, which is the saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): **"Whoever changes his religion, kill him."**

Then I said—and I continue to say—to those who harp on about declaring Muslim rulers infidels:

Suppose these rulers are infidels who commit apostasy, and suppose—also—that there is a supreme ruler over these people. In this case, it is obligatory for this supreme ruler to apply the prescribed punishment to them.

But now: What practical benefit do you gain if we accept—for the sake of argument—that these rulers are infidels who commit apostasy? What can you do and do?

Since they say: Loyalty and disavowal, we say: Loyalty and disavowal are linked to allegiance and enmity—in the heart and in action—and according to one's ability. Their existence does not require declaring one's infidelity and apostasy.

Rather, loyalty and disavowal may be for an innovator, a sinner, or an oppressor.

Then I say to these people: Here are these infidels who have occupied several locations in Islamic lands, and we, unfortunately, are afflicted by the Jewish occupation of Palestine.

So what can we and you do with these people? So you stand alone against those rulers you consider to be infidels?

Why don't you set this aside and begin establishing the foundation upon which the Muslim government is based? This is done by following the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace

[1] **Splitting the heart is a figure of speech for examining the inner motives**

and blessings be upon him), upon which he raised his companions and whose system and foundation he nurtured.

We have repeatedly stated this and emphasized it: Every Muslim group must work truly to restore the rule of Islam, not only in the lands of Islam, but throughout the world. This is in fulfilment of the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although those who associate others with Allah dislike it.” [As-Saff: 9]

Some prophetic hadiths indicate that this verse will be fulfilled later. For Muslims to be able to fulfil this Quranic text and divine promise there must be a clear path and a clear way. Will that path be by declaring a revolution against these rulers whose disbelief they believe constitutes apostasy? Yet, with this false and erroneous assumption, they are unable to do anything.

So what is the method? What is the path? There is no doubt that the correct path is what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to repeat and remind his companions of in every sermon: **“The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.”**

All Muslims, especially those who care about restoring Islamic rule, must begin where the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, began. This can be summarized in two simple words: **"purification and education."** This is because we know established and solid facts that are overlooked or ignored by those extremists who only declare the rulers to be infidels, and then nothing else. They will continue to declare the rulers to be infidels, and then nothing will come of them, or from them, except for tribulations and distress. What has happened in recent years at the hands of these people, starting with the tribulation of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, to the tribulation in Egypt and the killing of Sadat, and finally in Syria, and now in Egypt and Algeria, is visible to everyone: the blood of innocent Muslims has been shed because of these tribulations and calamities, and the occurrence of many tribulations and calamities. All of this is because these people have violated many texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, the most important of which is the Almighty's statement:

﴿لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.” [Al-Ahzab: 21]

If we want to establish Allah's rule on earth - truly, not just pretending –do we begin by declaring rulers infidels? Even though we cannot confront them, let alone fight them? Or should we begin—obligatorily—with what the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, began with?

Undoubtedly, the answer is:

﴿لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ﴾

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern "[Al-Ahzab: 21]

But what did the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, begin with?

Everyone who has smelled the scent of knowledge is certain that he, peace and blessings be upon him, began by calling people to Islam who he believed were ready to accept the truth. Then, those among the Companions who responded—as is well-known in the Prophet's biography. Then, after that, the torture and hardship that befell the Muslims in Mecca occurred. Then came the command for the first and second migrations, until Allah Almighty established Islam in Medina. There, skirmishes and confrontations began, and fighting began between the Muslims and the infidels on one side, and then the Jews on the other. Thus, we must begin by teaching people the true Islam, just as the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) began. However, it is not permissible for us now to limit ourselves to mere education. Islam has been infiltrated by innovations and heresies that are not part of it and have no connection to it, which has been a cause of the collapse of the lofty Islamic edifice. Therefore, it is incumbent upon preachers to begin by purifying this Islam from what has infiltrated it. This is the first principle: (purification). As for the second principle, this purification must be coupled with the education of young Muslims who are emerging on this pure Islam. If we examine the reality of the Islamic groups that have existed for nearly a century, their ideas, and practices, we will find that many of them have not benefited—or give benefit—in any significant way, despite their clamouring and shouting that they want an Islamic government. This has caused the shedding of the blood of many innocents under this flimsy pretext, without them achieving anything. We continue to hear from them beliefs that contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah and actions that contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah, not to mention their repeated failed attempts that contravene Islamic law. In conclusion, I say: There is a word. One preacher said—I wish his followers would adhere to it and implement it—that: **"Establish the Islamic state in your hearts, and it will be established for you on your land."** Because if a Muslim corrects his beliefs based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, his worship, morals, and behaviour will undoubtedly improve. . . . etc. But unfortunately, these people have not acted upon this good

statement. They have continued to cry out for the establishment of the Islamic state. . . but to no avail. Indeed, the poet's words have been true of them—by Allah:

You hope for salvation, but you do not follow its paths.

Indeed, a ship does not sail on dry land.

Perhaps what I have mentioned will convince every fair-minded person and will serve as a deterrent to every oppressor. And Allah is the source of help.

Praise of His Eminence Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz, may Allah have mercy on him

Praise be to Allah, and may prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, and those who follow his guidance.[2]

I have read the useful answer provided by His Eminence, Sheikh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, may Allah guide him, published in the newspaper Al-Muslimoon, in which he answered a question about: "Excommunicating –labelling others disbelievers- those who rule by other than what Allah has revealed without detail."

I found it to be a valuable statement in which he hit the nail on the head and followed the path of the believers. He clarified, may Allah guide him, that it is not permissible for anyone to excommunicate those who rule by other than what Allah has revealed simply by their actions, without knowing that they have deemed it permissible in their hearts. He cited as evidence what was reported in this regard from Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, and others among the early generations of this Ummah. There is no doubt that what he mentioned in his answer, in his interpretation of the verse:

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

"And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers." [Al-Maidah: 44]

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. [Al-Maidah: 45]

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

"And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient." [Al-Maidah: 47]

He explained that there are two types of disbelief: major and minor, just as there are two types of injustice, and so there are two types of disobedience: major and minor.

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[2] **[This is a comment by His Eminence, the eminent Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Baz on the previous statement by the eminent Sheikh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, may Allah have mercy on them both.]**

Whoever considers permissible ruling by other than what Allah has revealed, or adultery, usury, or other prohibited acts that are unanimously agreed upon to be forbidden, has committed major disbelief, major oppression, and major disobedience.

Whoever does them without considering them permissible, his disbelief is minor disbelief, his oppression is minor oppression, and so is his transgression, based on the statement of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him): **"Insulting a Muslim is disobedience, and fighting him is disbelief**." By this, he (peace and blessings be upon him) meant minor disobedience and minor disbelief, and he used the phrase to discourage this reprehensible act.
And similarly, his statement (peace and blessings be upon him): **"There are two things among people that constitute disbelief: slandering lineage and wailing over the dead."** Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih. His statement (peace and blessings be upon him): **"Do not return to disbelief after me, striking one another's necks."** Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim from the hadith of Jarir (may Allah be pleased with him). There are many hadiths with this meaning.

So it is obligatory upon Every Muslim, especially scholars, must verify matters and make judgments based on the Qur'an and Sunnah and the path of the early Muslims. They must beware of the pernicious path taken by many people, who issue judgments without detailing the matter. Scholars must devote themselves to calling people to Allah in detail and explaining Islam to people with evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah, encouraging them to adhere to it, advising and counselling them in this regard, while warning against anything that contradicts the rulings of Islam. In doing so, they will be following the path of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), his Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and his beloved Companions in clarifying the path of truth, guiding people to it, and warning against anything that contradicts it, in accordance with the words of Allah, the Exalted:

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّن دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾

"And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims." [Fussilat: 33]

Allah, the Almighty, also says:

﴿قُلْ هَـٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۖ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

"Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me. And exalted is Allah; and I am not of those who associate others with Him." [Yusuf: 108]

Allah, the Exalted, also says:

﴿ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ﴾

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best." [An-Nahl: 125]

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also said: **"he who guides (others) to an act of goodness, will have a reward similar to that of its doer"**

And the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **“If anyone summons others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those of the people who follow him without their rewards being diminished in any respect on that account; and if anyone summons others to follow error the sin of which he is guilty will be equivalent to those of the people who follow him without their sins’ being diminished in any respect on that account.”**

And the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said to Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) when he sent him to the Jews in Khaybar **"invite them to Islam and inform them of what Allah has enjoined upon them. By Allah! If a single person embraces Islam at your hands (i.e. through you), that will be better for you than the red camels."** (Agreed upon as authentic)

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) remained in Mecca for thirteen years, calling people to the monotheism of [divinity] Allah and to embrace Islam with advice, wisdom, patience, and a good approach until Allah guided, through him and his Companions, those who were destined for happiness. Then he (peace and blessings be upon him) migrated to Medina.

He and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) continued calling to Allah, the Exalted, with wisdom, good preaching, patience, and argument in the best manner until Allah prescribed for him jihad with the sword against the disbelievers. So, peace and blessings be upon him and his companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did this in the most perfect manner. Allah supported them, aided them, and granted them a good outcome. Thus, victory and a good outcome will be for those who followed them in righteousness and walked in their footsteps until the Day of Judgment. Allah is the One who is asked to make us and all our brothers in Allah among their righteous followers, and to grant us and all our brothers who call to Allah penetrating insight, righteous deeds, and patience upon the truth until we meet Him, glory be to Him. He is the Guardian of that and is able to do it. May Allah’s prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions, and those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment.

Praise of Sheikh Muhammad al-Uthaymeen, may Allah have mercy on him on the words of al-Albani and Ibn Baz

What was understood from the words of the two sheikhs[3]: That disbelief is for the one who considers it permissible. As for the one who rules it as a sinful transgression, then he is not a disbeliever because he did not consider it permissible, but it may be out of fear, inability, or something similar. Based on this, the three verses, i.e., the statement of Allah the Almighty:

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

"And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers." [Al-Maidah: 44]

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. [Al-Maidah: 45]

﴿وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

"And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient." [Al-Maidah: 47]

Are based on three conditions:

1- Whoever rules by other than what Allah has revealed instead of the religion of Allah, this is major disbelief that takes him outside the fold of Islam, because he has made himself a legislator alongside Allah the Almighty and because he hates His law
2- Whoever rules by it out of personal desires or fear for it or something similar, this does not constitute disbelief, but rather it becomes a disobedience.
3- Whoever rules with aggression and injustice - this does not apply to legal rulings, but it applies to specific rulings, such as ruling against a person in accordance with something

[3] **[after the previous words of Al-Albani were read to Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen on the issue of excommunication and ruling by other than what Allah has revealed. The commentary of Sheikh Ibn Baz on the statement of Sheikh Al-Albani was read to him, and after that, he (may Allah preserve him) commented with a useful, concise commentary on the two statements, summarizing what was mentioned above. We ask Allah to make it beneficial.]**

other than what Allah has revealed in order to take revenge on him - in this case, he is called a wrongdoer.

The descriptions are applied according to the circumstances.

Some scholars have said that they are descriptions of a single person, and that every disbeliever is a wrongdoer and every disbeliever is a disobedient. They have cited as evidence the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

"And the disbelievers - they are the wrongdoers." [Al-Baqarah: 254]

And the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا فَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ﴾

"But as for those who defiantly disobeyed, their refuge is the Fire." [As-Sajdah: 20]

This is the greatest disobedience.

Whatever the case, as Sheikh Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) pointed out, one must consider what the outcome will be. The issue is not theoretical, but rather practical application. What is important is what the outcome will be.

May Allah's prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions, and those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment.